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Sex education helps young be responsible

WITHOUT access to sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services, adolescents and youth, especially girls, face daunting reproductive and sexual health problems: unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal mortality and morbidity, violence, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, exploitation, and discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.

As in many countries, some 60% of the population of Malaysia is under 25 years of age.

Evidence shows that sexuality education programmes have a positive effect on initiation of sex, frequency of sex, number of sexual partners, condom use and other sexual behaviours that can prevent negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

Sexuality education also enables them to make informed decisions when they become young adults later in preventing unintended pregnancies, baby dumping and getting STIs.

While it is desirable for parents to provide sexuality education to their children, many parents dread it, and some rely on available educational materials.

Parental guidance is one of the most influential means in getting messages across to the children especially when it is delivered with warmth and openness.

Children are curious and naive, they keep looking for answers until they are satisfied. Therefore, parents have to be prepared with sufficient and appropriate information to educate their children.

The book *Where Did I Come From?* represents a good resource. It should not be brushed away. As long as sex education is presented in a wholesome manner – its biological and moral aspects intact – to the young, there is less danger of children becoming prey to irresponsible adults or sexual pervers. We need to teach our young to protect

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them, not to expose them to irresponsible sex.

Changing social conditions, rapid urbanisation, and an early start to puberty and delays in marriage, the accelerated spread of information and communication technologies across cultural boundaries, and the gradual decline of extended families have all contributed to changes in relationships and sexual behaviours among young people.

All these have prompted the Federation of Reproductive Health Associations Malaysia (FRHAM) to develop a comprehensive module called Reproductive Health of Adolescent Module.

FRHAM, as a leading sexual and reproductive health NGO, has partnered with relevant organisations in conducting numerous training sessions on how to use the module and has reached out to many young people in the country in improving their knowledge and skills with regard to issues on sexuality.

We strongly believe that it is important to inform and educate children so that they can make informed and responsible decisions in their life.

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